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Future Events - 2024

31st May - 2nd Jun

Thaxted Annual Weekend of Dance

The fabulous Thaxted weekend of dance will be held on its traditional weekend in 2024. All sides and members from the Morris Ring are welcome to apply to attend if not directly invited, this is regardless of gender profile of the dancers or musicians, all will be most welcome. We will also be inviting representatives' sides from the Morris Federation. Numbers may be limited so early booking is essential to avoid disappointment. Enquiries to revansandson@sky.com

10th Aug

Stratford-upon-Avon Day of Dance (Ring Meeting 369)

Shakespeare Morris invite you to celebrate their 65th Anniversary and the 90th Anniversary of the Morris Ring with a Day of Dance in Stratford-upon-Avon, ending the day with a feast. Initial expressions of interest to: shakespearemorris@gmail.com. Price set at £25 per head inc drinks and commemorative badge. Closing date for bookings June 22nd.

23rd – 25th Aug

Saddleworth Rushcart (Ring Meeting 370)

Saddleworth Morris Men invite all interested persons and sides to attend the Rushcart in 2024, on Friday 23rd August to Sunday 25th August (the Bank Holiday weekend). For more details contact Jonny Frankel (Rushcart Secretary) saddleworthmorris@gmail.com

28th Sept

Peterborough Morris Day of Dance (Provisional Ring Meeting 371)

A walking tour of Peterborough city centre. There will be dancing and a finale in St John's Square, together with spots around the city centre. We expect it to start at 10.30am and finish at 4.30pm. There is no charge and you are welcome to make your own arrangements for lunch. Afterwards we hope to offer tea and cakes at St John's Church in Cathedral Square (£2 suggested donation at the door). You may also wish to top and tail your day with breakfast at the Draper's Arms and a final drink at the Ostrich Inn. Contact baqman@peterboroughmorris.co.uk to confirm attendance.

Squire's Musings

Here I am writing my first musings of the year only as the 2024 dancing season is well under way. I hope everything is going well for our sides, and I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible on my various travels this summer.

Since I last wrote, a lot has happened, including this year's ARM, which of course involved, among other things, the election of my successor. Emma's election shows just how far the Ring has come over the last fifteen years, and I shall be working with her once the dance season has finished to ensure that she is up to speed on matters by next March. I know all of you will give her your support. It's going to be a bigger than usual handover, as Peter Austin has given notice that he'll be standing down also next March, and so you'll have a new Squire AND Bagman then. I wanted to remind you that the Bagman is the central force that drives the administration of the Ring, and Peter has worked incredibly hard since his election in 2021 – he will be missed and deserves all our thanks. Peter and I still have much to do however, and we will ensure that our successors are well primed for their tasks.

Feasts and Ales played a big part in my travels. The first Ale of the winter for me is usually Anker in November, and they put on an excellent evening as ever. 2024 began with the Jockey Plough tour, where it was nice to meet sides I hadn't seen in person before like Mersey. It was followed by the Stafford Feast where another great evening ensued, and it was good to see Stafford doing so well. Only three weeks after that I was back in the area at the Uttoxeter Feast, which was just a few days after their appeal for new members (or die) had been picked up by the media, and they were basking in the large number of new people who had come to their practice—and we all wish them the best for the retention of these new dancers; as I write, twelve of these people are coming to practices and dance-outs. February saw the Feasts at Leicester and Kennet, where I was treated to excellent food, beer and dancing, and at the latter, I finally got to meet Kennet properly and Yately and other sides for the first time. Devil's Dyke and Letchworth Ales followed in March, both of which were well-attended, and excellent evenings ensued.

As I've said several times, such events as these are important not just for dancing, drinking and eating, but for helping cement the strong fellowship that exists in the Morris. Ever since I started dancing 32 years ago, that aspect of the Morris has been one that distinguishes it from so many other "leisure activities" and it's great to see that this aspect that played such an important part in the foundation of the Ring is still omnipresent.

Since I handed over the chairmanship of the JMO to Open Morris and their chair Jen Cox at the beginning of January, things on the JMO front have been less frenetic for me than last year, not least as we are not celebrating this year the anniversary of the exemption of Morris from the 2003 Licensing Act. My last act as chairman was to present to Lord Redesdale with a photomontage of the 2003 and 2023 events in Trafalgar Square as a mark of appreciation for the part he played in 2003; I met him at the House of Lords, and had tea there and also a fascinating tour of the Lords and the Commons. Something that the JMO committee has done this year is to undertake a review of the JMO constitution, which was done efficiently and in a very focused manner by a sub-group of us. And I cannot finish talking about the JMO without saying that I attended the 2024 annual Day of Dance in Newark, ably organised by Trentside Holmes Morris of the Morris Federation. Even with

the best will in the world, there was not enough time to get round to every side there, but I particularly made a point of getting to see Grimsby and Adlington, not forgetting old friends like Rutland and Jockey.

My side don't normally go out on St George's day, but one side that does is Ewell St Mary MM, who do a tour of the City of London on that day. I joined them down there, and despite the wind and a bit of rain, it was a great day. It was great to watch them dance in Leadenhall Market and they put on a fine show. And at the end of the same week, on Saturday 27 April, we had the one-day Ring Meeting organised by Cambridge MM to celebrate their centenary, on which we all can congratulate them. Despite living very close to Cambridge, I don't go into the city very much, and I very much enjoyed dancing in various places round the town, and visiting a number of ale-houses that I rarely see. The final show on Parker's Piece was excellent, and was also on some of the best grass on which I have ever danced.

In less happy news, you will probably have read that East Surrey have decided that the 2024 season will be the last one they are doing. It's never good to read of the possible demise of a side, but East Surrey were one of the founder members of the Morris Ring, and that makes it doubly sad. Although they are suspending their activities after September, they are keeping alive the hope that they might be able to do something to celebrate their centenary in 2026. We wish them good luck and hope they can get more members and keep going.

On a brighter note, there are still three Ring meetings to come this year. In August we have that in Stratford and of course the Saddleworth Rushcart, while in September there will be the Peterborough Meeting. Details of these are all on the Ring web site.

Incidentally, one thing that has come up in our discussions with Saddleworth MM about how we can help ensure the financial future of the Rushcart is the manner in which local authorities may start insisting that Morris events in which they have to have a say should follow a set of procedures called the 'Purple Guide' (<https://www.thepurpleguide.co.uk/>). All sides should be aware of this as it may cause councils to insist that you have various safeguards in place that may well go over and above the standard risk assessments etc that have been a fact of life for a while. In particular, Saddleworth are having to incur unexpected additional costs as the council is insisting that they have a constant level of First Aid cover on hand; while the Rushcart has many unique features, the main thing for others to take on board is to be aware lest your town or city council suddenly come up with additional requirements before letting you go ahead.

Finally, in other news, you'll have seen that the Morris Census results are out. As we've publicised this already, there is no need to mention much here, although a video of a presentation of it by the author, Jack Worth, on 20 May will shortly be available on the Morris Federation and Ring web sites. However, it is gratifying that there are about 770 sides active in the country, and I think we can say the future of the Morris is looking good. Morris may not necessarily be over the next 100 years what it has been in the first 100 years of the revival, but we have to move to some extent along the same path as society so that Morris remains an activity that people want to pursue.

From the Bagman's Desk

There is an old saying, blink and you'll miss it.

This latest newsletter is being published later than I would like, but a number of factors have prevented me from delivering it in late April as usual. Unfortunately, despite my best efforts, I am still forced to make a daily crust in between dance events, but life can't all be fun.

I was present at both the JMO DoD and the Cambridge meeting along with the Squire, and on both occasions was primarily acting in my capacity as Squire of Jockey Morris so didn't see as much dancing as I might otherwise have been able to. In the face of changeable weather I still very much enjoyed myself and hope this trend continues through the season

I was also fortunate enough to be able to get along to the Upton Folk Festival on the Bank Holiday weekend and was impressed by the number and variety of teams present. While we rightly worry about what the future holds for such events, there is definitely hope for us all if the enthusiasm and commitment I witnessed is carried everywhere to the same extent.

I'm writing this having just returned from another adventure to Flanders with Jockey, where we all had a blast and put on some good dancing. If any teams fancy a jolly to Belgium, we'll happily put you in touch with the teams we have contact with. It was interesting to see gifts from Manchester MM and Towersey MM in the home of the host team, De Kegelaar, on previous visits to Antwerp.

Looking ahead, we've got a long summer of events to look forward to. Alongside the regular events at Thaxted and Saddleworth Rushcart, Shakespeare Morris will be celebrating their 60th anniversary by holding a one-day meeting in Stratford upon Avon. Please get in touch with them if you'd like to attend, as it promises to be a special event in the Morris Ring's 90th year since foundation.

Being a little more selfish for a moment, I am in two sides celebrating milestone anniversaries this year. Jockey Morris celebrate 75 years dancing, while the Traditional Ilmington Morris Dancers celebrate 50 years since the revival of the village side. Both teams are planning their own events throughout the year, and I hope to be present at both and report back later in the year how they went.

As ever, we still need hosts for events for future years so please get in touch if you fancy running an event on behalf of the Morris Ring.

Wishing you all a wonderful summer of dancing.

Peter

Notices

Saddleworth Rushcart Fundraising

https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/SaddleworthMorrisMen?utm_term=9x5p5ExQX&fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAR0xIdclWxXb2CJqz9cGlvetNgfxs2mGVtJaAz3bvlMBpHh9wxAnE144lwoaem_AUIUQZgLdesJEzeNej44EpopqWWT0kMXU_VhFzWwtrXkF_iWhfAK7LnVavMAKEKu4kNWUER_HUZUWNedQCUigJYCH

Each year Saddleworth Morris men organise the Saddleworth Rushcart Festival. Morris sides from around the country, and often overseas, gather and help celebrate the tradition of rushbearing in Saddleworth over one weekend in August. On the Saturday the Rushcart is pulled through the villages of Saddleworth where a variety of different morris sides dance at selected venues. The festivities continue the following day in Uppermill where sides continue to dance and perform to accompanying folk music. The whole event marks a tradition which was revived in 1974 and continues to be a popular and important event in the Saddleworth calendar.

The whole event is self funded through public support and donations. The pandemic forced Rushcart to be cancelled for two years. During that time there was little opportunity to fundraise. The event desperately needs help funding for this years event and also to help in preparing for a long term strategy to ensure Rushcart continues. The side must pay for the services of a Traffic Management Company to assist with road closures as well as providing an appropriate level of medical cover throughout the event which meets with authoritative guidelines. Saddleworth Morris men are committed to raising funds themselves and have organised a Beer festival to be held in August. We need the public's help to secure the funding for this years event. The total cost to put the event on is £3,000.

All donations are welcomed, for more information please contact Jonny Frankell via saddleworthmorris@gmail.com

Morris Ring Zoom account

A reminder to all sides that we have a dedicated Morris Ring Zoom account for online video conferencing. If anyone would like to use this Zoom account to host an online event, then please get in touch. Please ensure that any such event is appropriate to the aims of the Morris Ring and is also conducted with these aims in mind.

We invite you to the

Shakespeare Morris



Day of Dance

Saturday

10th August 2024



On a walking tour of Stratford-upon-Avon we will take in scenic spots including Shakespeare's Birthplace, Holy Trinity church and Shakespeare's New Place as well as mass dance spots on the riverside Bancroft Gardens.



To finish the day there will be an **Indian Banquet** (or Fish/Veggie Burger & Chips if you prefer) open to *individuals and sides* at King Edward VI School priced at £25 inc. drinks and a commemorative leather or vegan badge.

Throughout the day we will be raising money for the fabulous Shakespeare Hospice which will include monies raised from badge sales (£5 each) and a charity raffle with prizes kindly donated by local businesses including the nearby Shakespeare Brewery and North Cotswold Brewery.

Places, particularly for the meal, are limited and 14 teams already have their names on the provisional list.

Please book your place, including any meal requirements, by 22nd June on the link below and we'll get in touch to confirm places:

<https://forms.gle/RLK4UHJR1ozxdbew9>

For more details (inc. info on campsites etc): shakespearemorris@gmail.com

Morris Ring Publications

Matt Simons: Editor of the Morris Dancer
matt.j.simons@icloud.com

On-line Links:



The main MR website with millions of pages stuffed to the gunnels with all you need to know about the MR: <https://www.themorrisring.org/>

The Morris Ring Google Group (MRGG). Private Forum for debate or announcements. <https://groups.google.com/group/the-morris-ring>

Contact the Morris Ring Bagman to register to use.

Morris Ring Facebook site: <https://www.facebook.com/TheMorrisRing>

Morris Ring Twitter: <https://twitter.com/TheMorrisRing>

Call for Contributions

Any items of urgent Morris-related news, please send to me at bagman@themorrisring.org for inclusion in the next Newsletter.

If you have any photographs, you can send them to Duncan Broomhead, the Morris Ring Photo Archivist (duncan.broomhead@btinternet.com).

Charlie Corcoran, the Keeper of the Morris Ring Log Book, is keen to receive stories about Ring events, both the formal and the quirky (Charliecorcoran7@ntlworld.com).

